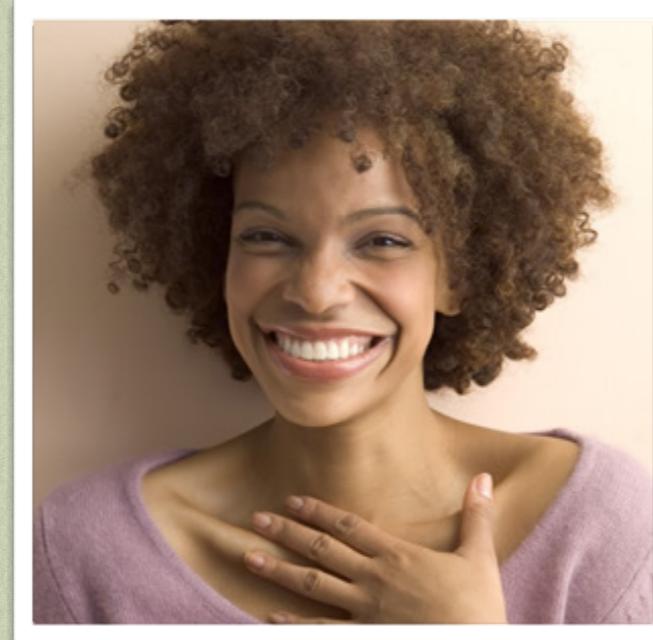


THE MENSTRUAL CYCLE



GETTING YOUR PERIOD



Around age 8 - 13 a girl may experience her first period or menstrual cycle. This is not a bad thing! Some girls have periods that last only 2-3 days while others have periods that last up to 7. When a woman gets her period she isn't sick, the blood can't hurt her and contains only good bacteria.



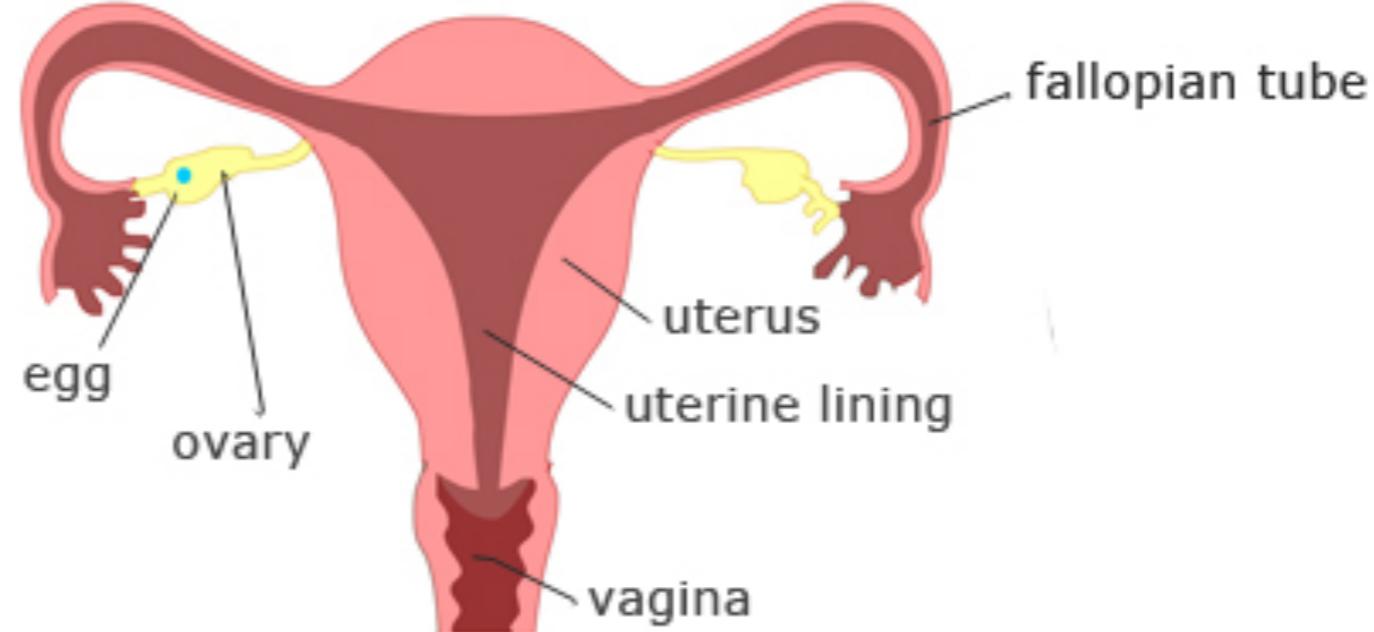
CRAMPS

-Some women have cramps (stomach pain) during the first few days of their menstrual cycle. It normally happens when the uterus starts to move the egg down towards the vagina.

-Have you ever had cramps? Did you know that cramps can be treated by putting a warm cloth on the stomach. Eating healthy foods and exercising can also make cramps go away.

PIMPLES

-A few days before a woman's period, she may start to get pimples on her face. Don't worry, they start to go away the older a woman gets!



The Menstrual Cycle

Once a month, an egg goes down one of the ovaries, through the fallopian tubes, and into the uterus. A few days before this begins, the uterus becomes extra bloody. This happens every month in case of pregnancy. If a woman is pregnant, the sperm from a man will meet up with the egg and develop as a baby in her uterus. If a woman is pregnant she won't have her period.

If you're not pregnant, the egg goes through the uterus and out the vagina. The egg will come out in your blood, this bleeding should last for several days. This blood is also called menstrual flow. A woman gets her period until she stops producing eggs every month.

PADS



When a woman gets her period, it's important that she doesn't sit in her blood for very long. A pad is a piece of cloth that a woman can put in her underwear to soak up her blood. Women should change their pads when they wake up and before they go to bed, and whenever else they feel like the pad may have filled up. Wearing pads can allow girls to keep going to school even though they're on their period.

CLEANING A PAD

When a pad gets dirty, it doesn't have to be thrown away! Pads should always be washed before they are reused.

- 1) Soak the pad in CLEAN, HOT water before washing it with soap
- 2) Beat the pad against a hard, clean surface several times
- 3) Put the pad back in clean water and swish it around until it's clean

Do NOT reuse the dirty water for anything! Do not clean, wash, or cook with the water after the pad has been washed in it. Dump the dirty water away from everything else.





Review Questions

1. How long do periods normally last?
2. If a woman is pregnant, will she get her period?
3. How can you make a woman's cramps go away?
4. Is a woman's menstrual flow dirty?
5. Do pads get washed in hot or cold water?
6. After you have washed your pad, can you reuse the water?
7. What causes cramps?
8. Do you know anyone who thinks getting your period is unhealthy?